DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 106 SP 027 024

AUTHOR Mulhern, John D.
TITLE The Challenge of Reform in Teacher Education: An Historical Perspective of Program Changes in Teacher Education at the University of South Carolina, 1982-84.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Degrees (Academic); *Educational Change; Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Liberal Arts; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Program Length; *Teacher Certification; *Teacher Education Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Extended Degree Programs; University of South Carolina

ABSTRACT

A mandate to reform the teacher education program on the Columbia Campus of the University of South Carolina was enacted in December, 1982. The mandate was contained in a motion to eliminate the baccalaureate degrees in education, the traditional route to teacher certification then offered. This action did not eliminate teacher education at the baccalaureate degree level; rather, it precluded the issuance of the B.S./B.A. in education degrees. Protocols were established on campus whereby undergraduate students interested in becoming teachers could earn a degree in one of the Liberal Arts outside the College of Education and complete a teacher certification program within an expanded baccalaureate degree of 138 hours. Although the planning committee considered a full five-year program as the most desirable option, the level of protest by the educational community against a five-year program was such that the committee arrived at the concept of the extended baccalaureate of 138 semester hours. This paper provides an historical record of the changes, the factors that led up to the action by the Board, and the implementation of the changes in the teacher preparation program at Columbia. (JD)

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THE CHALLENGE OF REFORM IN TEACHER EDUCATION: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF PROGRAM CHANGES IN TEACHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1982-84

John D. Mulhern

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher education programs at the University of South Carolina evolved over a period of one hundred years from the founding of the first chair of pedagogy in 1888. The programs on the Columbia Campus combined a general education program within a professional degree under the sponsorship of the College of Education. These programs at the University generally reflected the characteristics called for by professional organizations and state and national accreditation agencies and had first been accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in 1970. The graduates of the programs were generally acknowledged to be "good teachers" and the Columbia campus produced more teachers with initial certification than any other college or university within the State of South Carolina. Although on the surface, the programs and the graduates attested to a high degree of quality, a number of disturbing elements had developed during the decade of the Seventies: enrollments had declined dramatically, the average SAT scores of students entering the programs reflected the national decline and the percentage of graduates who passed the National Teacher's Examination on the first administration had begun to decline.

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Concerns about the decline in teacher education which subsequently were documented in A Nation at Risk[1] published in April, 1983, were in evidence at the University of South Carolina - Columbia programs.

The mandate to reform the teacher education programs on the Columbia Campus was enacted by the Board of Trustees on December 10, 1982. The mandate by the Board which predated the issuance of A Nation at Risk by a full four months, was contained in a motion to eliminate the baccalaureate degrees in education, the traditional route to teacher certification offered by the College of Education. This action did not eliminate teacher education at the baccalaureate degree level. Rather it precluded the issuance of the B.S./B.A. in Education degrees. A barrage of criticism was leveled against the University by the press and State professional organizations opposed to this action by a university board of trustees that was trying to bring about change in the way that institution prepares teachers in a state that historically ranks at or near the bottom of national rankings of student achievement. The following narrative is an attempt to provide an historical record of the changes, the factors that led up to the action by the Board, and the implementation of the changes in the teacher preparation program at the University of South Carolina. The challenge that it reports is one of reform of teacher education, a challenge that is facing every administrator and faculty in teacher education in the United States.

THE NATURE OF CHANGE

The action by the Board of Trustees on December 10, 1982 was one that eliminated the B.S./B.A in Education degree as the primary route to teacher certification on the Columbia Campus. It did not, however, mandate the specifics as to how the College was to structure programs for students who wished to earn teacher certification as part of a baccalaureate degree. It left that to the faculty and administration to resolve. At the time of the Board action, the College offered teacher certification in early childhood, elementary, or secondary school through its baccalaureate degrees, completion of the State course-by-course requirements or through an MAT program for liberal arts graduates. Within one month, following the action of the Board of Trustees, protocals had been established on campus whereby undergraduate students interested in becoming a teacher could earn a degree in one of the Liberal Arts outside the College of Education and complete a teacher certification program within an expanded baccalaureate degree of 138 hours. The initial agreement called for eighteen of those hours to be graduate credit, but this was subsequently modified and left as a decision to each program. Although this planning committee considered a full five-year program as the most desirable option, the level of protest by the educational community against a five-year program was so vocal that the committee arrived at the concept of the extended baccalaureate of 138 semester hours. This alternative plan of an extended baccalaureate degree of 138 hours constitutes the framework for all

teacher education program revision that has taken place on the campus. In addition to earning a degree in one of the Liberal Arts extended to 138 hours for teacher certification students, the students must complete the following requirements that were not required previously by the College of Education baccalaureate degree programs:

1. A two-semester sequence in mathematics - college algebra and pre-calculus or computer science.

2. A two-semester sequence in a modern language.

3. A major in a field of study taught in the public schools (previously required only of secondary majors).

4. An expanded general education component of 60+ semester hours which reflects the accepted University definition of a general education.

At the same time, protocals were adopted within the framework for the professional component that resulted in:

1. A three-course sequence in Education that is prerequisite for admission to teacher education.

2. A modification of the pedagogy curriculum to emphasize the research/literature on effective teaching.

3. A field centered curriculum that requries 60% of the professional work experience to take place in public classrooms.

4. A professional education component of 27 semester hours in secondary education, 39 in elementary and 42 in early childhood.

BACKGROUND

The momentum for change in teacher education began with the teacher surplus in the middle 1970's, it merely peaked in 1983 when the National Commission for Excellence in Education released its report.[1] The call for change was not unheeded by the College of Education Faculty at the University of South Carolina; the faculty committees and the formal processes for change simply did not lead to substantive program modification. Faculty committees were organized in 1977 to examine a five-year teacher education program and college reorganization. At the same time a faculty team was funded through the State legislature to develop a teacher education curriculum that would prepare effective teachers. The five-year curriculum committee met on several occasions but the charge was never clearly articulated, and the committee simply ceased meeting after a year. The College reorganization committee was unable to agree on a new organization for the College because there was no immediate need to reorganize when the five-year program committee ceased to function. A faculty team, under the able direction of a senior professor was successful in developing a series of instructional pamphlets based upon the "job" of the effective teacher. The materials and a related publication[2] were and continue to be relevant to the initial preparation of teachers. In spite of the success of this project, there was no action by the faculty to adopt them when they were presented for review during 1979.

In December, 1979 a new dean was appointed to head the College of Education and was given the charge to improve the teacher education programs in the College. Two specific areas within the College were identified by the central administration of the University as being of particular concern and in greatest need for change. First, the Liberal Arts component of the baccalaureate degrees awarded by the College of Education was viewed as having a less rigorous general education component when it was compared with other undergraduate degrees on campus. Second, the caliber of the students enrolling in the College were perceived to be less well qualified academically when compared with entering students in other colleges on campus. These observations were not unique to the University's Columbia Campus programs but were generally observable in teacher education programs throughout the nation. A subsequent examination of student personnel data by the college administration during 1980/81 confirmed the basis for this concern about the College of Education. At the same time the dean initiated a series of meetings with program faculty and leadership about the need to strengthen the general education requirement and to be more selective of the students in the various programs. Although these meetings and recommendations were favorably received, they did not result in any formal action to modify the teacher education programs. The College did implement successfully an admissions test to the teacher education programs that utilized the mean performance of sixteen year olds in the United States for mathematics, reading and writing as the cut-off point for

admission. The implementation of this requirement did eliminate a number of students at the lowest end of the ability range in the College.

There were three other factors that came into prominence during the Summer of 1982 and were of significant importance in subsequent events related to the action by the Board of Trustees. First, a College faculty committee completed a study of the College organization during 1981-82 and recommended the formation of three departments, including one for teacher education programs. This recommendation was presented to the faculty during the May meeting of the College and was not adopted. The inability of the faculty to organize the College into viable faculty units constituted a major stumbling block to any meaningful change in many program areas, not just teacher education. Second, the South Carolina State Department of Education introduced a State-wide entrance examination for teacher education programs. The cut-off norms used by this date were considerably below those of the University examination and would allow those students previously excluded from the University's programs in teacher education to re-enter.[3] The College administrators were extremely anxious about this negation of the sole reform measure that had been successfully implemented by the College. Third, rumors about the coming report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education had begun to circulate. The initial rumors about teacher education held a promise of a devastating report on the ways in which teachers were prepared. In anticipation several college administrators and

faculty had prolonged discussions about the need to strengthen teacher education programs on the campus. Action was taken by the dean on only one of these items during the Summer of 1982. At that time, he implemented the recommendations of the faculty committee on College organization and appointed three persons as Assistant Deans to serve as interim department chairpersons.

THE POINT OF DECISION

During the first week of September, 1982, the dean of the College of Education was called to a meeting with the Provost of the University to discuss teacher education. At that meeting the dean reported his inability to marshall the necessary faculty interest or votes to bring about any substantive change in the general education component of the programs or increased standards for student acceptance and graduation. The dean identified the baccalaureate degrees awarded by the College as a major stumbling block to reform due to the lack of faculty concern about the need for substantive changes in the degree. A preliminary discussion was held at that time concerning initial teacher certification as part of a five-year program and the elimination of the College's baccalaureate degrees.[4] The dean was asked to estimate the professional reaction to a college of education in which the major focus would be on graduate programs rather than teacher preparations with non university educators. Subsequently the dean contacted a dozen or so educators within the state and reported back to the Provost that there was general acceptance that the

University should place higher priority on the graduate programs. Although these may have been private feelings of the dozen or so persons contacted, these were not their public feelings. This turned out to be false and misleading information. These conversations and other campus consultations on upcoming budget reductions resulted in a special faculty meeting in October to discuss a widely circulated rumor about the elimination of the teacher education programs. At that time, the dean indicated that no plans were underway to eliminate teacher education but that the College was facing a major budget reduction that might impact on the size and organization of the program. In the meantime the Provost was engaged in a consultation process with a committee of the Faculty Senate relative to budget reductions throughout the University and including the College of Education. On December 3, 1982, the Provost met officially with the faculty of the College of Education and informed them of the proposed budget reduction and the proposal to eliminate the B.S./B.A. in Education degrees. The formal presentation of the budget reduction to the Board of Trustees indicated that the undergraduate degrees awarded by the College of Education were to be eliminated and the teacher education program reduced in size. This was a critical statement because it called for the elimination of degrees but not of programs. Consequently the College retained the right to offer teacher preparation programs at the undergraduate level but not with the College's degrees. The faculty met on several occasions before and after the Board of Trustees meeting on December 10, 1982, in order to protest the change. At no time did the total

faculty assemble and at no time did it appear that the protest group enjoyed the support of a majority of the College faculty. They did, however, enjoy majority support of the faculty who attended the meetings.

THE ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS FOR CHANGE

The major responsibility for the re-establishment of the teacher education programs rested with the dean of the College and the assistant dean who served as Interim Chairperson of the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education. During the month of January two important steps were taken. First, the dean negotiated the basic framework for the extended baccalaureate degree with the deans of the other three colleges. Although the memorandum of understanding outlining the agreement was not finalized until February 10, agreement had been reached on the basic points by January 20. It was at this time that the faculty redirected its efforts toward the extended baccalaureate degree rather than the redevelopment of the MAT degrees. Second, the Assistant Dean for Instruction and Teacher Education organized work groups within the department with specific assignments. The five groups consisted of a coordinating council which was charged with responsibility for coordination and deadlines; an early childhood education group responsible for the redevelopment of that program; an elementary education group responsible for the redevelopment of the elementary and the middle school programs; a secondary education group responsible for the redevelopment of those programs; and a new

courses group responsible for the development of the three education courses that are a prerequisite for admission to teacher education. The Coordinating Council consisted of representatives from each of the other groups plus the reading program. The assistant dean working with the Coordinating Council set deadlines at the various levels in order to present the programs at the May 4, 1983, Faculty Senate Meeting. The assistant dean and the Council member representing each program conducted all the negotiations with the faculty representatives from the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences and Science and Mathematics. In all instances, the program groups had reached an agreement about the program with appropriate faculty in other colleges before entering the program into the approval process. The approval deadlines were established as follows:

April 15: College of Education Faculty Meeting

April 22: New Courses and Programs Committee of the Faculty Senate

May 4: Faculty Senate Meeting

The changes were presented internally within the College as a total program whereas materials submitted to the New Courses and Programs Committee and subsequently to the Faculty Senate consisted of University catalog changes only. There was, however, dialogue between the College of Education and other University faculty and committees on an almost continuous basis. The program changes were endorsed by all approval bodies on a unanimous basis. The revamped programs are truly the work of the faculty and are being

enthusiastically supported by the entire University community. Final approval of the revised programs by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education was granted during January of 1985.

A LOOK FORWARD

Teacher Education program and course refinement initiated during 1983 has continued as a major undertaking within the College. The initial effort to strand the effective teaching research/literature in the program during 1983 and 1984 is being supplemented by an added effort to strand computer/technological utilization in the program during 1985/86. The revised teacher education courses and practica were field tested during the Spring of 1985 and are being implemented during 1985/86. At the same time faculty in the teacher education programs have received training on effective teaching through the Program for Effective Teaching, a South Carolina Department of Education program utilizing the Madelaine Hunter approach.

In order to broaden educator participation in the College's programs, the University in cooperation with the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA) and the Palmetto State Teachers Association has established a Council on Teacher Education of University faculty and professional leaders. This Council which in reality is a policy recommending board on all teacher education programs of the University is truly a cooperative undertaking of the University faculty and the teaching profession. Student recruitment efforts were initiated during the 1983 Summer

Orientation program. Since that time freshmen are informed about the revised programs through a series of information sessions that are held throughout the year. As of May, 1985 over 300 students in Humanities and Social Sciences and Science and Mathematics have declared their interest in teacher education and have completed one or more of the three prerequisite courses. Over 120 of these declared students are freshmen, a dramatic increase over the average figure of 60 entering freshmen to the College of Education during the past several years.

A final note, the last of the students under the old baccalaureate degrees of the College of Education graduated in May, 1985. At that time, the new era in teacher education at the University of South Carolina was fully implemented.

IN RETROSPECT

If process means one stands motionless unless the faculty, or often a vocal minority of the faculty, endorses a change - then process was fractured in this instance. However, the University Board of Trustees exercised its prerogative as the final policy and decision authority for the University and eliminated a degree that appeared to be "reform proof." This action, initially perceived by many as being a negative one, has been more than offset by the positive working relationships that have been established by the Education faculty with their colleagues in the Liberal Arts and the re-establishment of a teacher education program that includes a new level of excellence for the University of South Carolina and teacher education in general.

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[1]The National Commission for Excellence in Education: A Nation At Risk. Washington, D.C. 1983. 37 pages.

[2]Friedman, Myles I., Brinlee, Patricia S., and Hayes, Patricia B. Dennis. The Job Related Curriculum Project. Longman Inc., New York, N.Y.

[3]This standard has been raised eliminating the concerns expressed here.

[4]Mulhern, John D., "Graduate Teacher Education: In Crisis or Transition," Chapter in A Re-examination of Graduate Teacher Education. Washington, D.C. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1979.